

REDMON, JULIA LEE PRIEST

INTERVIEW

#8574

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BIOGRAPHY FORM
WORKS PROGRESS ADMINISTRATION
Indian-Pioneer History Project for Oklahoma

Field Worker's name Zaidee B. Bland

This report made on (date) September 17, 1937

1. Name Mrs. Julia Lee Priest Redmon
2. Post Office Address 714 W. Cypress St., Altus, Oklahoma
3. Residence address (or location) 714 W. Cypress St.
4. DATE OF BIRTH: Month December Day 18 Year 1869
5. Place of birth Denton County Missouri.

6. Name of Father Peter Priest Place of birth Tennessee
Other information about father _____
7. Name of Mother Nancy Turnbull Place of birth Missouri
Other information about mother _____

Notes or complete narrative by the field worker dealing with the life and story of the person interviewed. Refer to Manual for suggested subjects and questions. Continue on blank sheets if necessary and attach firmly to this form. Number of sheets attached _____.

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FIELD WORKER ZALISE B. BLAND
Indian-Pioneer History S-159
September 17, 1937.

INTERVIEW WITH JULIA LEE PRIEST REDMON
714 W. Cypress St. Altus, Oklahoma

I married a man who was gang boss for the workmen of a railroad. He sometimes had a special gang of workmen but usually a regular gang more for the maintenance of a road already built rather than a construction gang. We came across from Missouri in the nineties. A house was always furnished us to live in, and we boarded the men. After there was no depot anywhere near us, or a town, and people would come to the station to get on the train. We became the depot and hotel all in one for the public. I got twenty-five cents for all meals of transients, unless there was a washout and a train was held up for two or three days, as was often the case in eastern Indian territory, and then any price was paid for a meal that was laid down. More than once there was a wash-out, and a passenger train would be tied up a day or two and we would cook everything we had

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in the house to eat. We would serve all the day and night and the people would come in and eat and lay down money and walk out. I have found more than one five dollar bill laid down for a meal. Of course some times the railroad authorities would instruct us to feed the crew, and then we would keep count of meals and send in an expense account. Once when I was in the bed with a new baby and only the hired help, and my sister to serve meals, a special bridge gang came to repair a bridge and ate with us for two meals. There were forty-nine men and we never did get a penny. A foreman got 45.00 or sometimes 50.00 a month. The men got 21.00 per month and paid 13.00 for room and board. The man usually lost all the days they could not work but Mr. Redman worked his men in all kinds of weather so they seldom had lost time.

Fuel

We burned wood mostly, used a lot of old ties, and they made good wood.

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CHURCH AND SCHOOLS

We seldom attended church and had no schools near enough to attend in those days.

SOCIETY

The men played games cards and had violins. They washed their clothes on Sunday at the creek. They were a happy go lucky crowd; usually Americans.

WILD GAME

There was plenty of wild game and my husband loved to hunt and spent many noon hours and after night hunting. He was a practical joker. There was a deep ditch not far away from one of the places we lived, and if one of the boys went with him for the first time he invariably told him to run ahead and he would follow. The ditch was deep and the man would always take a tumble, but the bottom of the ditch was sand and so no one was ever hurt, but it was always funny. We served lots of quail, wild turkeys, possums, squirrels, coons, and occasionally a deer. In the fall we always gathered a lot of pecans, hickory

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nuts, and walnuts.

We liked the pecans best and never failed to lay in plenty. Most all land was open but if the trees grew on posted land we gathered just the same and gave the owner one half of all the pecans gathered.

Once Mr. Redmon did not like his road boss and asked for a transfer and got it. He had only been moved one month before the road boss whom he disliked was also transferred right over him again. He was very overbearing and asked so many useless questions. When he came out and began to ask questions, Mr. Redmon would tell him what he thought he should know and then reply to all questions "It looks like rain, don't you think it will rain."? It would make the roadmaster very angry but he knew he had just as well hush and go on for Mr. Redmon would never answer another question.

FOOD

Every one was prosperous in those days, and we could get most anything we wanted to eat very cheaply.

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Beans, potatoes, light bread and dried or fresh fruit stewed, syrup and some kind of meat were considered staple and served every meal. Beef steak for breakfast, oat meal, hot cakes, or biscuit, and eggs when we could keep them. There was always some kind of pie for six o'clock dinner, and in the lunch basket for the noon meal. I made light bread every day, and I used a yeast cake I made from hops and meal. I surely did make delicious bread and hot rolls. I got a cake of hops, boiled three potatoes, used the water from the potatoes to pour over enough meal to thicken, let all raise three separate times adding meal each time to make it thick and the last time I made a roll, and cut it into cakes and dried it in the shade. I used one cake and two boiled potatoes every time I made six loaves of bread.

I made apple pies, mince meat, raisin and currant pies. I also made ^a fried pie we called the half moon pie. I stewed the fruit and made a rich biscuit dough, rolled a round crust, put fruit in

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center folded over and fried in deep fat. I usually used lard. I put up fifty^{to}one hundred gallons of lard, and you could buy all good kettled rendered lard for ten cents a pound.

I served coffee three times a day, and the men usually drank it black, for we could not get milk very often. We had to use Borden's condensed milk at ten cents a can, and the milk was very sweet. I used Arbuckle coffee and paid fifteen cents per pound. I had a pass that I could go to the largest town near for supplies. I made coffee in a big three gallon coffee pot. I boiled the water in the tea-kettle, and poured it over the grounds and let boil up once and then set back to settle. I usually poured out a cup two or three times and poured it back into the pot to settle the grounds. I emptied my grounds just once a day. I could buy two chickens that would weigh three pounds apiece for a quarter. I used a lot of salt pork. It was almost like fresh pork, as we could get it right out of the brine. When I could

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get milk I made a lot of egg custards. I used two eggs, two cups of milk two spoonful of flour and nutmeg to flavor. I made a baking powder crust and put the custard right in the raw crust and baked all together with four tablespoonsful of sugar to each pie. For my crust I use two cups of flour one cup of lard and a little pinch of baking powder and a little salt.

The men were all more or less superstitious. They most all carried a rabbit's foot in their pockets for luck, or an Irish potato to keep off rheumatism. There was a man killed on one stretch of the road that had to be patrolled every time it rained. Mr. Redmon had to make the men take a piece of chalk and mark a certain post to prove they had been by that place, or they would not go past where the man was killed, after night.

We had a lot of ways of trying our fortunes. We would go to an old waste house (Southern people call it a vacant house), wash our clothes and hang them in front of the fireplace to dry as there was

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always a fire. Once when some of the girls were trying their fortunes, Mr. Redmon and a man went to see what they were doing. You are supposed to see the face of your future husband in the flames. He stooped down to look through a break in the wall near the fireplace when the man with him said, "Get out of the way. I want to see." Mr. Redmon stepped aside and as the man stooped over to peep a billy goat came up and butted him on through the break in the wall right in among the girls. They were all frightened at first but it was funny too.

I had a sister who died and left a tiny baby and mother took it to raise. When it was a few weeks old mother was in another room spinning and father was sitting by the baby when sister came in and said, "Where is mother?" father said, "In the other room spinning." She bent over and looked at the baby and said, "Don't move to Arkansas. The baby will not live out this year anyway." They moved to Arkansas but later came back. The baby died in the spring.

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